

SITUATION REPORT NO. 6
INCIDENT NO. 99-009
DATE: April 6, 1999 TIME: 2:00 p.m.

TO: Governor Edward T. Schafer
State Capitol
Bismarck, ND 58505

1. NATURE OF DISASTER: Spring flooding – Above normal soil moisture content throughout North Dakota, compounded by seven years of flooding, has resulted in overland and river flooding.
2. DEATHS AND INJURIES: An individual suffered facial injuries during a storm-related car accident in Barnes County.
3. DAMAGES: Heavy snowfall and ice from severe early spring storms on April 1-3 caused power outages and lift pump failures, leaving several eastern North Dakota communities without power. Schools were released early on April 1 because of storm conditions. Road crews battled problems with drifting snow that plugged roadways they had cleared. Several vehicle accidents occurred throughout the state because of poor driving conditions. These conditions delayed emergency response time. The National Weather Service (NWS) has reported that total snowfall amounts from the storm ranged from four to eight inches in the Devils Lake Basin. In the Red River Basin, from Grand Forks south to Fargo, freezing rain amounts ranged from three-quarters of one inch to one inch. North of Grand Forks to the international border, six to 12 inches of snow fell in the Red River Valley. In the Sheyenne River Valley, one to two inches of freezing rain was recorded in the southern portion and six to 10 inches of snow in the northern part. Precipitation totals for the James River varied from 2.3 inches in Carrington to 1.6 inches in Jamestown. The Souris River Basin recorded water equivalent amounts as follows: 3.2 inches in Rolette, 0.4 inches in Sawyer, 2.4 inches in Towner, 3.6 inches in Rolla, 1.6 inches in Upham and 0.4 inches in Westhope. Water equivalents for the Missouri River at Bismarck 1.2 inches to 2.1 inches in New Salem.

Hydrologists for the NWS expect recent precipitation events to cause second crests as high as first crests at gauging locations along the Red River of the North. The NWS cautions that projections are "highly dependent" upon precipitation and temperatures during this upcoming week. The Red River was expected to crest two feet above its 17-foot flood stage in Fargo on April 10. On April 6, the river at Fargo measured 18.85 feet. Downstream in Grand Forks, the river level measured 42.48 feet on April 6, after cresting late last week near 44.5 feet. The river is expected to continue a slow fall during the next two days and then begin a slow rise to 44.5 to 45.5 feet on April 11. In Pembina County, the river at Drayton measured 41.14 feet; flood stage is 32 feet. NWS hydrologists expect the river to crest at 41 to 41.5 feet on April 6 and then fall slowly for about three to four days before rising to a second crest of 41.5 to 42 feet on April 15. The Red River had risen to 44.70 feet at Pembina on April 5. The NWS expects the river to crest once at Pembina at 50 to 50.5 feet on April 18.

A flood statement for the Red Lake River, a tributary which drains into the Red River at Grand Forks, calls for the river to crest near 21 feet on April 10 at Crookston, MN. The river measured 19.18 feet at Crookston on April 5; flood stage is 15 feet.

In Barnes County, up to 1.27 inches of freezing rain had fallen by April 2 on power, cable television and phone lines, causing service outages throughout the county. The communities of Oriska,

Fingal, Nome and Pillsbury were without power as were 1,500 Cass County Electric customers. At one point, Cass County Electric had 12-15 lines down, and Otter Tail Power had five. Three poles located near the west side of Hobart Lake were at 45-degree angles after ice from the lake pushed them over. Because of power outages, basement flooding occurred when residents were unable to operate sump pumps. The storm also toppled trees, including one that fell on Jefferson School in Valley City. Several trees in the Valley City area lost branches of up to four inches in diameter. The storm also damaged business signs. In addition, overland flood waters have washed out 14 township roads, five of which are located in Binghampton Township near Fingal. Over-filled closed basins are encroaching on roads.

Southwest of Barnes County, in LaMoure County, flood waters, resulting from recent precipitation, have isolated a farmstead located in the southeast part of the county. As a temporary measure, water is being pumped across a nearby roadway to allow access for the farm family. The N.D. Department of Transportation, Valley City District, supplied the pump.

Freezing rain resulted in damaged and downed power poles, causing power outages in western Dickey County. Roads were covered with six to eight inches of slush. The area recorded 1.4 inches of rain, slush and hail this weekend, which hampered road clearing efforts. As a result of the additional precipitation, water is rising in Ludden.

Utility crews were working in Traill County on April 4 to restore power to 600 rural residences after ice storms downed power lines and poles. Power was lost but has been since restored to the cities of Mayville, Portland, Hatton, Clifford and Galesburg. After cresting at 13.65 feet on March 30, the Goose River dropped below its 6-foot flood stage on April 6 to 5.77 feet.

The weekend storm caused power outages for more than 4,000 residences in the Grand Forks, Thompson and Emerado areas. Rainfall prevented a couple of waste water pumps from keeping up with high runoff flows. Tree branches damaged homes, vehicles and power lines, and impacted streets, driveways and sidewalks. Although cleanup crews have made streets passable, the director of Grand Forks City Parks District expects final cleanup efforts to take more than a month.

Weekend storm conditions hampered efforts by rural residents in Walsh County to pump water from ring dikes and to sandbag property. At least one rural family had been evacuated from the Red River area. One Walshville resident reported that flood waters were underneath his mobile home and had damaged most of his equipment and tools. The resident's horses have been evacuated from the area. The northbound lane of I-29 was closed after flood waters measuring four inches deep spread across a 200- to 300-foot section of the interstate, one mile north of the Minto exchange. Traffic was rerouted at Marvel to U.S. Highway 281, to Grafton and back to I-29. County Road 2, from two miles north of N.D. Highway 17 to the Walsh County/Pembina County line, has been closed. Other closures include County Road 4, from County Road 15 to County Road 19, and 60 Street NE from I-29 to the Red River. The Walsh County Highway Engineer estimates that 30-plus miles of township roads are flooded or not accessible.

Red River flood waters are flowing out of the river banks in rural areas near Drayton. N.D. Highway 66, between Drayton and Robin, was closed after it was inundated by flood waters. Low-lying areas along the eastern portion of the county have also been inundated. The Pembina County Emergency Manager anticipates that revised forecasts for the Red River will require more protective work in Drayton. Pembina County officials report that 12 inches of snow fell on the area during last week's snow storms.

In McHenry County, damage reports indicate that approximately 120 road sites in 29 townships are either washed out or inundated with flood waters. Diking efforts are occurring along one county road. Flood waters have surrounded two farmsteads, and 16 culverts have been washed out. County officials reported that the cost of repairs will exceed townships' budgets. They are also concerned how snow depths of eight to 16 inches, which fell during this weekend storms, will impact the Mouse River. Four log jams were causing fluctuations in the river's level.

4. RESOURCES:

LOCAL: County and township road crews cleared snow from roadways. Local health departments and Women, Infant and Children's Program staff are providing health-related and flood cleanup information.

STATE: The N.D. Highway Patrol is monitoring road problems, including the inundated portion of I-29 in Walsh County. Crews from the N.D. Department of Transportation cleared snow from roadways and are building a crossover for the flooded area on I-29 near Minto.

FEDERAL: No change from previous reports.

5. VOLUNTEER ACTION: The American Red Cross provided shelter for a Walsh County resident. Rural residents are helping each other with sandbagging, transportation and obtaining supplies. Two rural residents helped evacuate a neighbor and transport him to Grand Forks.

The Salvation Army has made flood cleanup kits available for residents of Pembina County.

6. MAJOR ACTIONS: Utility crews were working to restore service to customers, and road crews had cleared roadways after snow and ice from April 1-3 storms caused power outages and clogged roads. Utility companies sent extra personnel to assist with restoration of power. As an example, Northern States Power sent to Grand Forks eight crews from Fargo, Minot and Sioux Falls.

The N.D. National Guard supplied a generator for the city of Fingal in Barnes County under a cost-share arrangement.

The Barnes County Commission issued a disaster declaration on April 2 as a result of the spring ice storm. As part of flood-fight efforts within the county, all 21 bridges crossing the Sheyenne River are cleaned daily. In Nome, the mayor and fellow officials went house to house to pump basements in an effort to prevent flooding. Crews have begun cleanup of fallen trees and limbs and have barricaded roads. The Emergency Manager assisted a local radio station in obtaining a generator.

The Dickey County Water Board has been holding meetings on plans to ditch the Larson Sloughs to the Elliot Drain in an area located northeast of Fullerton.

In response to flooding along the Red River, U.S. West has sent personnel to Fargo and Grand Forks to activate the company's Emergency Operations Center (EOC).

In the Grand Forks area, both storm recovery and flood-fight efforts have been underway. A shelter had been opened at the Civic Auditorium. Generators were used to keep lift stations in the Grand Forks area operational. Crews worked throughout the night of April 2 to build levees behind the Waste Water and Sludge Plants. A private contractor was prepared to start building the dike on the berm and streets of Alpha Avenue and on a street at Red Dot Place. This effort will bring the diking system to 52 feet. Workers are raising the levee at Belmont Road from 50 to 52 feet. The city Sludge Plant has been shut down and is discharging directly into the river. Two homes on Boyd Drive have been sandbagged. A diver fixed a sluice gate at the south end of a drainway. Most overland flooding is under control, although some flooding occurred between 40th Avenue South and 11th Street because of problems with a grate cover. But overland flood waters in that area and other locations in the city are draining from inundated areas. At the University of North Dakota (UND), residence halls and cafeterias remained open for students unable to travel home for the Easter holiday. UND officials are monitoring the English Coulee and have constructed a small clay levee near Wilkerson Hall. The Grand Forks EOC issued a press release asking residents to plug flood drains and restrict water usage during the outage to prevent possible sewer backup. Most culverts have been opened.

Since April 1, Walsh County Public Works crews have supplied 5,600 sandbags and 60 yards of sand to rural residents. Firefighters with the Oslo, Minnesota, Fire Department helped one rural Walsh County family move items from the basement to higher floors. The city of Minto is preparing its sandbag filling equipment in preparation for additional rises along the Forest River. The city of Grafton has plans in place to fill open areas in the city dike and have sand and sandbags in place, if needed. Officials are checking on the condition of rural residents isolated by floodwaters.

Functional coordinators for the Pembina County Emergency Operations Plan have been placed on standby and the EOC has been activated. Flood coordinators and volunteers have been identified. The county health nurse and staffs from the North Dakota State University (NDSU) Extension Service and from the Women, Infant and Children's Program are planning for recovery campaigns aimed at flood cleanup efforts. Drayton workers installed a 24-inch inflatable sewer plug, and water pumps have been pre-positioned as part of flood-fight efforts. City workers are building earthen dikes by the city shed, which is at 40 feet, 1 to 1 ½ feet below the projected crest for the Red River at Drayton. A dike is also under construction behind the Catholic church and lift station in east Drayton. Workers in Pembina are placing polyvinyl on top of the earthen dikes and securing them with sandbags. On April 6, workers are expected to begin placement of sandbags for closures on the city's earthen dike system in south Pembina.

7. ASSISTANCE NEEDED: Assistance has been provided, as reported.
8. OUTSIDE HELP ON SCENE: USACE, Red Cross, consulting engineers and members of the N.D. Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD).
9. OTHER: Situation Reports published by the N.D. Division of Emergency Management are posted on the Division's Internet home page. The address is: <http://www.state.nd.us/dem>.

Douglas C. Friez, State Director